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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: VICE PRESIDENT HASHIMI UPDATES AMBASSADOR ON
LATEST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

11. (S) During a February 11 meeting, the Ambassador and Vice President Hashimi discussed the Executive Council (Ex-Co), the Political Council for National Security (PCNS), Tawafuq's return to government, legislation, threats by Anbar sheikhs directed at the Iraqi Islamic Party, and Hashimi's U.S. travel plans. Hashimi questioned PM Maliki's commitment to the Ex-Co, noting success would be achievable only via creation of a specific "roadmap," or joint work program. The PCNS, he believed, was being distracted by issues other than its core mandate: the U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Talks. Hashimi blamed Maliki for delays in reaching a final deal to return Tawafuq to government, and said it was imperative that he be given a stronger role in the security field. On legislation, in his view, the budget impasse was an issue for Kurds and Shia to settle. He revealed no objections to the draft Provincial Powers law, and said it was the responsibility of provincial councils to fire a governor. The draft amnesty law would likely be voted on during the current session, following recent improvements. On Anbar, Hashimi complained about recent public threats of violence toward his Islamic Party made by two Anbari politicians, and confirmed that the party was pursuing legal action in court. Hashimi provided a letter on the subject (septel) in which he criticized U.S. support to the individuals who made the threats. End summary.

12. (SBU) The Vice President was joined in the 60-minute meeting by Political Advisor Khalil Azzawi, and a notetaker. The Ambassador was accompanied by Staff Assistant and Poloff (note-taker).

Executive Council - A Slow Start

13. (S) Asked to comment on the Ex-Co, Hashimi stated that after three meetings, "nothing significant" had been accomplished. "You say that Maliki has changed, but I don't see it." If he had more authorities, "the Council would be more productive; more than mere empty promises." It was imperative, he added, that the Council agree to a "roadmap" or a specific plan of action. So far, he lamented, "there has been nothing to lead me to believe we're moving in the right direction." Nevertheless, he said that a paper he circulated among Ex-Co members on devising an "Iran policy" would be debated at the next meeting. He said it was undecided whether the Council would meet on February 13, but that the Presidency Council would convene ahead of any fourth Ex-Co meeting. Asked to enumerate agenda items, Hashimi instead complained that the Council needed by-laws to be effective. Similarly, the group of deputies assigned to follow up on agenda items -- the "Support Committee" -- was

not functioning.

Political Council for National Security

¶4. (S) Hashimi believed the PCNS would keep to its bi-weekly meeting schedule, convening next on February 16. The PCNS, he said, was assigned the job of managing the Long-Term Strategic Framework (LTSF) talks with Washington. To that end, participation had been widened (bloc leaders representing 10 seats; down from 15) so that any LTSF agreement would have maximum legitimacy among political groups when it came time for CoR ratification. Invitations were therefore extended to Hewar leader Saleh Mutlaq, Iraqiya, former Deputy Prime Minister Salam Zoubai, and others. Hashimi said he had also made special efforts to encourage Sadrist participation. Despite the single mandate of the PCNS, he said, other "security issues" (e.g., the situation in Diwaniyah) was included on the group's agenda, distracting the group from its primary raison d'etre. Hashimi complained that this group, too, had no by-laws. Last, the VP noted that he was encouraging former PM Ayad Allawi to participate, but the latter was concerned by rumors that the GOI might bring charges against him. Allawi needs a clear statement from the PM on this issue, he added.

Tawafuq Front's Return

¶5. (S) Asked about Tawafuq's plans to return to government, Hashimi said teams from Tawafuq and the PMO reached an agreement on February 5 regarding reciprocal demands, but

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complained that the PMO's team returned the next day with unilateral changes (Note: PMO lead negotiator categorically denied the allegation to Poloff in private on February 11. Nevertheless, the agreement has not yet been signed by leaders pending Tawafuq's presentation of candidates for its 6 cabinet seats. End note). Hashimi said he had no intention of returning Tawafuq's ministers to the same Maliki cabinet. Rather, as the Presidency Council had agreed, they would await formation of a new, smaller cabinet as discussed in the Executive Council. "Maliki wants us to return to the Cabinet, which he says he will re-shuffle after one month; there's no way we're just filling empty slots." Hashimi insisted that the most important issue for him was the security file. "We must be treated as equals, like the Kurds." He insisted that the Sunnis be included in decision-making on military and intelligence matters. The Vice President requested Embassy assistance to press Maliki to accept a stronger Sunni role in the security realm. To highlight his frustration in this regard, Hashimi related a recent incident where he said two juveniles detained in a GOI Baghdad jail were released, only to be killed before their parents' eyes as they left the building by "Sadr militias."

Legislation Issues

¶6. (S) Budget: The Ambassador implored Hashimi and other Iraqi leaders to quickly resolve the budget impasse, in order to provide funds to ministries and provinces to deliver services. Hashimi responded with a familiar denunciation of the Maliki government, questioning its "standards" and professionalism but said Tawafuq "could live with" 17 percent being apportioned to the Kurds. "We've made our reservations known; but we aren't looking to make problems for the Kurds," he said. After all, "the money is going to Iraqis." The "technical issues" which had led to the current impasse, the Vice President commented, stemmed from shortcomings of Iraq's Constitution. On a draft Provincial Powers bill, Hashimi simply said, "we're waiting; ISCI and Dawa are disputing --

we're open minded about it." The provincial council must be responsible for firing a governor; "otherwise, what's the role of the PC? -- this would create chaos." On amnesty legislation, Hashimi said that recent changes to the law made it more acceptable, and predicted its passage during the current legislative session.

Anbar Tribal Figures Threaten IIP

17. (S) The Ambassador told Hashimi that he had received the VP's letter (septel) on public threats made by two Anbar sheikhs against the IIP in that province. The Ambassador said he would respond formally, and declared there was "no way" that the USG would either support or endorse comments made by the offending Anbaris. Nor did the U.S. manipulate Al Hurra and Radio Sawa to provide a platform for such threats, as insinuated by Hashimi in his letter. "We had no role in the comments made by Hamid al-Heiss or Ali al-Hatim," he stated. Hashimi said many people were questioning their motives, and suggesting that U.S. backing had allowed them to be so brazen. The Vice President also said he warned PM Maliki that the latter's continued support to these figures was extremely dangerous, and would have negative consequences. Asked if the PM was supportive of the Anbar High Committee, Hashimi said he had the impression that the PM did not support the group.

Hashimi U.S. Travel

18. (C) The Ambassador confirmed a formal request from Hashimi, conveyed through the Iraqi Embassy in Washington, to visit Washington April 12-20. The Ambassador suggested that the Vice President should do less traveling and remain in Baghdad to deal with the country's problems. Nevertheless, the USG should be able to accommodate a visit at that time, pending further consultation.
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